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Uganda: The Democratic Party (DP), including the treatment of its members (2004 - January 2006)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Established in 1954, the Democratic Party (DP) has variously been described as a political party that maintains "strong Roman Catholic support in southern Uganda" (*Political Parties of the World* 2005, 602), is an "advocate of centralization and a mixed economy" (*Political Handbook of the World 2005-2006* 2005, 1211), and "seeks a multi-party political system" (*Europa World Year Book 2005* 2005, 4386). In November 2005, John Ssebaana Kizito was elected new DP leader and named presidential nominee for the March 2006 elections (Xinhua 28 Nov. 2005; see also *New Vision* 29 Dec. 2005; BBC 5 Jan. 2006; US 10 Jan. 2006), replacing former DP leader Dr. Paul Kwanga Ssemogerere (*Political Parties of the World* 2005, 602; *Europa World Year Book 2005* 2005, 4386; *Political Handbook of the World 2005-2006* 2005, 1211).

Generally, political developments resulting from a July 2005 national referendum saw Uganda transition to a multi-party system (US Jan. 2006; BBC 3 Jan. 2006; HRW 18 Jan. 2006). Nevertheless, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the "main opposition coalition boycotted the referendum, complaining that the decision by President Yoweri Museveni—who has been president since 1986—to push through a constitutional amendment in June [2005] that removed presidential term limits, allowing him to run for a third term, undermined any efforts at democratic reform" (ibid.).

Treatment of DP members

International human rights sources, reporting on events of 2004 and 2005, noted that opposition party members and supporters continued to face harassment and "threats to their safety and freedom" (HRW 18 Jan. 2006; ibid. 13 Jan. 2005; Freedom House 11 Aug. 2005; AI 2005). For example, in March 2004, Human Rights Watch stated that government security forces had detained and tortured political opposition supporters for reportedly challenging the country's political system (29 Mar. 2004).

With regard to DP members, news sources of 2005 reported on incidents and accusations of politically motivated harassment, including state-sponsored disruption of public demonstrations and arrests of supporters and members (*Mail & Guardian* 10 Mar. 2005; *The Nation* 31 Mar. 2005; *New Vision* 19 Dec. 2005; ibid. 29 Dec. 2005). In March 2005, the Gulu branch of the DP stated that the army had detained two of its senior party officials (*Mail & Guardian* 10 Mar. 2005). An army official in Gulu confirmed the arrests and explained that the DP members had been arrested for their alleged links to the rebel group Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (ibid.). In addition, at the end of March 2005, the DP youth wing Vice President, Mukasa Mbidde, was arrested in Kampala's Constitution Square for "demonstrating against the proposed third term for President Yoweri Museveni" (*The Nation* 31 Mar. 2005).

In December 2005, *New Vision* reported that the DP had received funding from the UK's Conservative Party (19 Dec. 2005). Consequently, according to DP officials, "some of their supporters were being arrested and asked to explain the source of their money" (*New Vision* 19 Dec. 2005). Also in December 2005, DP presidential candidate Ssebaana Kizito accused President Museveni of authorizing the detention and incarceration of political opponents "on false charges" (ibid. 29 Dec. 2005). However, according to the article, Kizito did not clarify which opposition candidates had been targeted (ibid.).

While further information about the treatment of DP members could not be found among sources consulted by the Research Directorate, in a February 2005 article, *The East African* reported that internal difficulties have forced much of the DP leadership to defect to other parties, that more than half of the DP's Ministers of Parliament (MPs) have defected to the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) (16 Feb. 2005).

Moreover, in January 2006, the BBC reported the results of an independent opinion poll on presidential candidates running in the March 2006 elections, which showed that DP candidate Kizito had apparently scored low

in public support, with just 5 per cent of those polled favouring the DP in the upcoming election (5 Jan. 2006).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

An oral source with the International Crisis Group could not provide the information requested.

Internet sites, including: *Country Reports 2004*, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), European Union, Factiva, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), International Crisis Group (ICG), ReliefWeb, United Kingdom Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), World News Connection, World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).

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